316 339 is quarried, lorry loads of wood are brought out, and, as in the manufacture of lime, layers of gypsum are interspersed with layers of wood and the pile fired. The slabs of gypsum are then removed and beaten into a fine powder which, when mixed with water, acts like cement. It has the advantage of being quick setting and is still used by those who cannot afford to buy imported cement.

WEAVING

288 438 291 [697] Weaving is carried on in some of the villages of Bahrain, in Abu Saiba, south of the Budaiya Road and elsewhere. "Awzars," simple garments worn by the villagers around their waists in the summer, are woven from imported cotton, while in many coastal villages the sailors spend the winters weaving sail-cloth. The prisoners on Jidda Island are also employed in weaving, on imported Irish looms, but their activities can hardly be classed as a local industry.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ANTIQUITIES OF BAHRAIN

THE WORLD'S LARGEST GRAVEYARD

172 764 THE tumuli of Bahrain have never been counted, but their number has been estimated at 50,000. In these tumuli Bahrain possesses one of the unsolved mysteries of archaeology, for despite the numerous expeditions that have been made to discover their origin, this is still in dispute.

There are three groups of tumuli in Bahrain. The largest group is that which lies on the plain between Aali and the Rifaas. The second group is to the far north of Bahrain, on each side of the Manama-Budaiya Road between Jidhafs and Diraz. The third group, consisting of a few dozen graves, is in the clearing to the north of the Suq al-Khamis Mosque.

The first group of tombs is daily passed by hundreds of people travelling between Manama and Awali, but the best examples of tumuli in this group are not along the main road but are near the village of Aali. These mounds are the largest in Bahrain and while some of them are used by the villagers for baking their pottery, the majority are just as they were left after their opening by various archaeologists. Most of these tombs face south-west and P. B. Cornwall[1] has suggested that the reason for this is that the builders of the mounds worshipped the Evening Star, Venus, which at sunset lies to the south-west. The majority of the tumuli have two storeys and, in the chamber tombs, there are niches cut into the sides of the passages. The sides and roofs of the graves themselves are of local stone and were originally covered with a layer of gypsum. Some of the tumuli are surrounded by low walls of mud and gravel. Finds in these tumuli have included the bones of men and animals, ivory statues, pieces of circular boxes, golden ornaments and earthenware vessels decorated with black stripes.

There is little agreement among the experts as to the origin and dating of these burials and each has drawn his own deductions from the

there is a deep depression surrounded by large blocks of stone which was once a great spring said to have irrigated much of north-western Bahrain. This spring, known as Ain Sejour, is traditionally associated with the name of the Caliph Abd al-Malik (685-705) who is reputed to have come to Bahrain with an army to chastise the people who had given refuge to politico-religious refugees from Iraq. According to local histories the Bahrainis worsted the invaders in a war by a clever use of the underground water channels and a truce was signed. Later the Caliph is said to have murdered the Bahraini leaders and to have filled in this well "to reduce the pride of the people of Bahrain," since then it has been dry and the land around it has reverted to desert. It seems unlikely that the Caliph himself came to Bahrain, he probably sent one of his generals and later tradition ascribed the leadership to the Caliph himself. 172

Several well-to-do families own houses in Diraz, and when pearling flourished its people were important nakhudas (captains) and pearl merchants. Many of the villagers are still divers and keep their boats on the shore near the little mosque north of Budaiya Garden. For use in these boats the villagers weave their own sail-cloth on local looms. 228 288 554

JESRA

On the edge of the open plain about 4 miles south of Budaiya is Jesra, the point where the pipeline from Arabia crosses to Bahrain, here also is a village whose Arab inhabitants are mainly retainers of the Ruling Family. Several Shaikhs have also built substantial houses in the village, as well as gardens irrigated from artesian wells. Another road leads from Jesra to Rifaa al-Gharbi, following the route of the pipeline across the desert. 315 361 491

MALAKIYA

Four miles south of Jesra the road, after passing through the villages of Karzakan and Dumistan, enters the little village of Malakiya, set in the centre of thriving date gardens, some of which belong to merchants in Manama. The only claim to interest in this village is a large tomb which is held in great veneration by the Shia community of Bahrain and is visited by pilgrims from all parts of the Islands. The tomb is of a certain Amir Zaid, but there is some difference of opinion about his identity. Some contend that he was Zaid bin Sohan, one of the Companions of the Prophet, but according to other local authorities he was a certain Amir Zaid bin Umaira al-Abdi who witnessed a covenant of truce made between the people of the Islands and al-Mua'lla bin al-Hadrami, the Moslem conqueror of Bahrain. A third version is that the worthy Amir was the leader of the people of Bahrain in a war that took place between them and the Caliph Abd al-Malik (See paragraph on Diraz). It has not yet been decided which of these versions is in fact the true one, but this does not deter Shia pilgrims from visiting Malakiya. 361 778